

TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – ASHFORD UNIVERSITY

PREPARED BY: HEATHER DELANGE

I. SUMMARY

Pursuant to the Degree Authorization Act, this item recommends Probationary Authorization for Ashford University to operate in Colorado. Ashford University has made application to operate and received a favorable recommendation from an external evaluation team.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, commonly referred to as the Degree Authorization Act, which sets out the terms under which certain types of institutions¹ may offer degrees or degree credits.

The Commission administers the Degree Authorization Act by determining an institution's eligibility to operate pursuant to statute and CCHE policy. CCHE policy requires Commission action for an institution to begin operating.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Ashford University has made application for authorization under the Degree Authorization Act. Department staff contracted an external evaluation team, comprised of a librarian and an educational consultant, to conduct a paper review of Ashford University. The results of the review favor Ashford University's beginning an operation in Colorado. However, DHE staff have been informed that, at this time, Ashford University only plans to operate a call center from its Colorado location.

Bridgepoint Education, Inc., the parent company of Ashford University, intends to lease a 151,331 square feet of real estate located at 1515 Arapahoe Street in Downtown Denver to house its Denver Operations Call Center. The occupancy at this location will be comprised of Admissions Counselors, Managers, and Directors. A Vice President of Ashford University reporting to Bridgepoint Education's Chief Administrative Officer will oversee the call center's operations. The current staffing plan allows for 20 employees per working unit each with an admissions manager and 4-5 working units per division.

¹ (1) Colorado publicly supported colleges and universities; (2) properly accredited private colleges and universities; (3) postsecondary seminaries and bible colleges; and (4) private occupational schools authorized by the Division of Private Occupational Schools.

Ashford University's main campus is located in Clinton, Iowa and holds accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and offers degree programs ranging from the Associate's level to the Masters level.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Probationary Authorization for Ashford University. Included in the recommendation is a requirement that Ashford University notify department staff prior to beginning any operational or instructional activities in Colorado that are beyond the scope of the information presented for this initial authorization.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-2-103.3